

"WE'RE NEVER DONE"

By Debi Dawson, PEO Soldier Public Affairs Officer



PEO Soldier celebrates a milestone as BG R. Mark Brown recognizes 1SG Gabriel Harvey from the 82nd Airborne Division as the 750,000th soldier fielded with RFI gear.

BG Mark Brown became the Program Executive Officer (PEO) Soldier just a few months ago, but he is already envisioning a future in which the Army shares a common network with joint service partners and the result is economies of scale.

"My two commands (PEO Soldier and Soldier Systems Center at Natick) complement each other," Brown said. "The Natick Soldier Center (an element of the Research, Development and Engineering Command) runs an advanced technology demonstration, known as Future Force Warrior, which feeds technologies to the PEO Soldier Land Warrior program and the current soldier force. It also drives technological advances to feed our Future Force solution to networking the warrior—Ground Soldier Systems. The bottom line is that the Army is proceeding toward one common network."

Land Warrior Testing Proved Positive

PEO Soldier completed assessment of its new Land Warrior system during operational testing at Fort Lewis, Wash., during the summer. "Thanks to that success, we now have the first Army unit to go real-world operational with the latest Land Warrior capabilities," Brown explained.

More than 400 soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Lewis were equipped with 440 Land Warrior Systems and 147 Mounted Warrior Systems. Land Warrior combines computers, lasers, navigation modules, radios and other technologically-advanced equipment to improve soldiers' battlefield communications ability, situational awareness and, ultimately, their ability to fight effectively and survive. Mounted Warrior, designed for combat vehicle crewmen, includes communications and displays that will improve situational awareness on or off the vehicle. Land and Mounted Warriors will be able to receive voice data and tactical Internet connectivity in

order to communicate effectively with troops on the ground, Mounted Warriors in other vehicles and unit leaders. The assessment continued through the summer and ended with a limited user test in September.

Brown explained the reasons that Land Warrior is important to the Army: "It networks soldiers to the Army Battle Command System today, and it preserves all of our options for the future. The evaluation at Fort Lewis included Land Warrior over all domains—doctrine, organization, training, leader development and so forth. It showed that Land Warrior gives soldiers the ability today to know their locations and that of their buddies, as well as the enemy. We will present our findings to the Army in the second quarter of fiscal 2007.

"Nevertheless, in some areas we're never done," Brown added. "With body armor, for example, we're always trying to get better ballistic protection, lighter weight, more flexibility and more body coverage. Natick is working with MIT studying nanotechnology as a way to make individual body armor lighter, more flexible and cheaper. You always have to be looking for the next best thing."

Brown returned to the theme that colored his remarks throughout. "We will never go to war without our allies and without our joint service partners, the Marines, the Navy, the Air Force. In fact, we have a number of joint programs with the Marines and the Special Operations Forces and we are seeking to have more. One of my strategic objectives at PEO Soldier is to converge programs with the Marines and Special Operations Forces so that we can recognize and achieve economies of scale in production and logistics support."

"I grew up in the military," Brown concluded. "My father was a career Air Force officer and my grandfather was a soldier. It just seemed a natural progression for me to serve my country. If I could have selected a job on my own, this is the one I would have selected. The PEO Soldier affects every single soldier, every day, everywhere, around the world."



PEO Soldier operational assessments conducted in 2006 at Fort Lewis, Wash.

